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ABSTRACT

The community-based training model conducted at Pennsylvania State University in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office for the Aging, provides accessible gerontological education throughout the State through a multi-faceted approach of informal seminars, undergraduate academic courses, short-term module presentations, and certification programs. At a time of fiscal accountability, the Pennsylvania prototype shows how the cooperative efforts and coordination of activities of two organizations can be combined into an organized attack upon a critical social problem. The five features unique to the Pennsylvania approach include a program that is cooperative, universal, accessible, progressive, and responsive. An important component in the long-range educational plan is that educational opportunities are planned in 20 off-campus centers for all persons within the State who work with older adults. Minimal cost has enabled more paraprofessionals and volunteer workers to attend. Students deciding to matriculate may transfer short-term training and work experience into credit hours. Likewise, with increasing education, persons can change occupations within an agency or transfer among service provision agencies. The 1974 training plan included three workshops on Normal Aging, Aging Problems, and Alternatives to Institutionalization, with a strong evaluation component planned for the series. (EA)

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COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING: A MODEL FOR UNIVERSITY AND STATE PARTNERSHIPS

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Tom Hickey

NUMBER 1 IN A SERIES

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TOPICAL PAPERS: SERIES I
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING
and
COMMUNITY RESEARCH IN GERONTOLOGY

Edited by Tom Hickey

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Topical Papers: Series 1
Educational Programming and Community Research in Gerontology

Edited by Tom Hickey

Gerontology Center
Amy Gardner House
Pennsylvania State University
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Preface

This publication has enabled the Gerontology Center to combine the objectives of two major goals; the development and dissemination of educational materials concerning aging and older persons, and the writing and publication of professional papers by Center staff members.

It is our sincere hope that this series will serve as a useful resource for continuing educators, program planners, practitioners and all others interested in learning more about gerontology.

Papers are available through the Gerontology Center, Amy Gardner House, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802.

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Series Number One

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Recent years have seen a growth in the number of people over age 65 and in the mandated services and agencies designed to serve them. This growth has resulted in immediate and long-term educational needs for those individuals providing service. Simultaneously with need, an increase in research about aging has developed. Therefore, new knowledge, skills, and related research must be coordinated into useful curricula for service providers. In Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University, a land grant institution, and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office for the Aging, are cooperating to provide accessible gerontological education throughout the state. This includes short-term training for immediate needs and programs designed to meet future manpower demands.

A prototype of this model is the community-based training that has occurred in 1974. A prototype can be defined as "a first full-scale and usually functional form of a new type or design of a construction." The design being examined at Penn State is a multifaceted approach to gerontological education including informal seminars, undergraduate academic courses, short-term modules presentations, and certification programs. The model employs the three major capacities of a university, research, resident instruction, and continuing education. Every discipline should be firmly founded in all three areas. This insures that knowledge will be continually tested, disseminated and used.

Community-based training is the first facet of this program which has been presented throughout the state to heterogenous audiences. Before examining workings of the prototype, attention will be given to the long-range plan. Five characteristics of this approach identify it as a unique model in program development. The Pennsylvania approach is co-operative, universal, accessible, progressive and responsive. Other programs

exist which resemble it, but the Pennsylvania model is the only system of gerontological education which embodies all five characteristics.

The long-range plan is cooperative in that it is sponsored by two parties, a land grant institution and the state unit on aging. These two organizations operate as two separate but equal collaborators. These collaborators' domains differ, but do intersect at the critical area of gerontological education. The state unit's mandate is to plan and administer social services to older adults throughout the state. Therefore, it is intimately interested in the quality of gerontological service providers and is concerned that training be of immediate use to service providers. The university's mandate is to provide and disseminate research about aging to the academic community and to its statewide constituency. The university is concerned that the training reflect academic excellence and rigorous methodology, i.e., that the curricula be true and up-to-date reports of gerontology.

The state unit on aging recognizes the importance of occupational education in gerontology and gives it a high priority. The Pennsylvania State University has a long history of individual professionals interested in gerontology who have been doing basic research in the area. These two factors, a self-assessed need and available resources, resulted in a partnership between these two agencies. Communication and cooperative ventures are possible and are planned for the future. A system of mutual trust and responsibility is developing.

The long-range plan is universal because of the cooperation which has occurred. The university and the state unit on aging both have well-defined boundaries. Both are to operate, to serve and to educate within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Therefore, the word universal is used to

mean that educational opportunities are planned to service the whole state, the constituency of each party. It is important to mention this since many ideas are not implemented because necessary resources must come from people or agencies with different constituencies. Moreover, cooperative partners with the same constituency often part because one or the other partner decides to emphasize a segment of the constituency to the exclusion of others, or one partner may decide to conform to minimal standards of operation rather than to reach out to all constituents. For example, Title III of the 1973 Older Americans Act Amendments mandates that each state unit on aging plan Area Agencies on Aging to service a minimum of 55 percent of the older adults in the state. According to the plan of the Pennsylvania state unit on aging, 100 percent of eligible adults will be within the confines of an Area Agency on Aging. Similarly, the state unit includes the total state in its plan of gerontology education rather than a small area. This attempt to service the whole audience is an important component in the long-range educational plan.

The universal nature of the plan is also evidenced by the variety of educational and occupational levels of the target audience. The Pennsylvania plan is designed for all persons within the state who work with older adults. This necessarily includes people from a variety of settings with varying educational and work experiences.

The accessible nature refers to geographical and financial accessibility of training programs, planned and implemented. A land grant institution must serve throughout the state. Geographic accessibility exists because of developed facilities of the university. This is operationalized in 20 off-campus centers within the state. These centers and the main campus are the facilities in which conferences are conducted. Within the university

system each faculty member is charged with conducting research, resident instruction and continuing education duties. An already existent network of resources, persons, and places has been mobilized to provide programs of gerontological education.

A second area of accessibility is financial. State institutions are to provide low-cost instruction. Additionally, support from the state unit on aging has allowed the presentation of reduced cost workshops this year. Minimal costs of the first year's program to the state's social service providers has enabled many paraprofessionals and volunteer workers to attend who otherwise could not have attended. Frequently, a social service agency recognizes the importance and necessity of continuing education, but only highest level staff, whose fees are covered, are excused to attend. Lower level staff, often intimately interacting with older clients, cannot afford the training. Incorporating gerontology within a state educational system, rather than a private university, increases this financial accessibility.

The long-range educational program being developed is a progressive system. Curricula with academic and career step implications are visualized. At The Pennsylvania State University, academic steps imply that a gerontological service provider participating in informal workshops about aging may possibly receive academic credit. If the student decides to matriculate, he or she can transfer the use of short-term training and work experience into credit hours. Courses in basic gerontology, within the academic discipline of the student's choice (e.g., social work, education, nursing, psychology, etc.), would be available at commonwealth campuses near the person's job. A student could qualify for an associate degree

and/or a baccalaureate degree with a specialty (not a major) in gerontology. This multiphased program would be responsive to the working adult by allowing attendance at classes away from the main campus of the university and concurrently, informal workshop programs would be available. The adult student would have work situations in which to practice newly learned skills and knowledge.

Career step implications mean that with in[illegible]ducation a person can change occupations within an agency or can tra[illegible] service provision agencies. These changes would occur because training and work experiences would qualify a person for a certificate of gerontological expertise. The state unit on aging could use certificates, associate degree and baccalaureate degrees as indices of competence. For example, a person could complete high school, four short-term training modules in basic gerontology and with three months work experience with older adults be certified as a geriatric recreation aide. This type of certification would lead to a standardization of social services within Pennsylvania.

A final characteristic of long-range planning is its responsiveness to a variety of audiences. Not only must programs contain reliable research findings, they must be realistic, practical experiences which satisfy the individual learners and employers. Accordingly, a network of regional specialists on aging within the Department of Public Welfare, university faculty and social service providers has been identified and used as advisors when planning training. This proposed long-range plan of training has potential for satisfying diverse educational needs of aging and gerontology education.

This is an overview of five identifying characteristics of a model developed through the cooperation of a land grant university and a govern-

mental office. During 1974, the first phase of this plan, community-based training, was designed to meet current educational needs of social service providers to the elderly. The training was presented in four locations within the state. Over 500 people participated in the training. (Table A includes basic demographic data about the participants.)

There was general agreement between the state unit on aging, The Pennsylvania State University, and regional specialists on aging that topics for the first year's workshops should be a general introduction to aging practice and research. Topics for the three sessions (total of six days) as outlined in the preliminary brochure are listed below.

Workshop 1: Normal Aging

Basic Information about Aging
Biological Changes Associated with Old Age
Psychological Tasks and Needs of Old Age
Sociological Adjustments of Old Age

Workshop 2: Aging Problems

Difficulties Encountered by Old Agers
Techniques for Working with Older People
Case Studies about Elderly Persons with Problems
The Elderly in Rural and Urban Areas

Workshop 3: Alternatives to Institutionalization

A Rationale for Alternatives
Government Action to Encourage Alternate Forms of Care
Model Programs for Noninstitutionalized Old Persons
Advocacy for Alternatives

The program was planned with a transition from the academic and theoretical to a programmatic and practical emphasis. Primary learning objectives in each location were identical and the same speakers went to each of the four locations.

From the very beginning, plans for the series included a strong evaluation component. Formal and informal observations were made throughout the series. There were three uses for the data which were collected. The

first set of observations was used for immediate feedback purposes. Participants filled out evaluations of each main speaker. The form used was short and based on a semantic differential format. This information could be easily coded. Since each speaker went to four locations, there was time to evaluate the audience reactions to his/her first talk and indicate where changes could be made to improve later presentations. Another form used to provide immediate feedback was a one-page questionnaire distributed at the end of each two-day session. This form resembles the types of evaluations most often used in continuing education programs. That is, it measured "the happiness factor" of participants. In addition, it asked for specific suggestions and recommendations for future programming. These were used to make immediate changes in the format and the topics of the workshops. Because the same series, "Society and the Aging," was presented in four locations, there was an opportunity to use consumer input and to continuously improve the training. This is an important use of evaluation data that is often overlooked or unavailable because of programming constraints.

A second type of evaluation was product evaluation, that is, an attempt to measure changes that occurred because of training. The two changes we were most interested in were: 1) changes in participants' knowledge about gerontology and 2) changes in participants' attitudes. A pre/post measurement design was used. Instruments included a 20-question quiz on gerontology, an attitude inventory developed by the Ontario Welfare Council (1971) and a sentence completion test developed by Golde and Kogan (1959). When changes are recorded, this type of data is useful to provide justification for the existence of training. However, it must be realized that paper and pencil tests administered according to a classical research design are probably not

the best indicators of changes that occur during or as a result of continuing education programs.

A third type of evaluation data provided information about types of educational programs social service providers desire. This questionnaire was distributed at the last day of training. Participants requested topics, formats, and schedules for next year's series and made general comments on the long-range plan that is developing. Limited results of this survey of 145 social service providers are provided as percentages below.

A. In your circumstances do you feel there is a need for programs of this type?

99.3 yes
0.7 no

B. Are you or your group near enough to a Penn State Commonwealth Campus to participate in such programs?

88.3 yes
9.0 no

C. If certificate programs, academic credit programs, and associate degree programs were presented in a ladder-like progression, do you think the majority of workers in your area would complete the sequence?

69.7 yes
17.9 no

D. Do you agree or disagree that some formal education in gerontology should be mandatory for all in-service workers in the field?

84.1 agree
13.8 disagree

E. Which of the following do you think might be the greatest deterrent to attracting in-service workers to an academic program such as this?

33.1 cost in money
62.1 time
11.0 lack of incentive
10.3 lack of interest

These answers indicate that the Pennsylvania model may be a viable one. Questions A and B indicate that there are self-assessed educational needs and that accessibility is possible through the use of off-campus centers. Question

C indicates an interest in a program with progressive academic steps. Question D indicates that a system of social service certification may be desired by workers. Question E indicates that these programs are financially accessible to the majority of the participants. The identification of "Time," in the final question, as the major deterrent to participation in educational programs, may indicate a need for additional excused time from work responsibilities for attendance at occupationally oriented programs.

The final form of evaluation is useful in identifying programs participants desire. In addition to the questions above, detailed information from the clients will be used in planning the next year's community-based training. All three forms of evaluation provided an integral part of this year's training. It is anticipated that more sophisticated and reliable measures can be devised for future evaluation attempts.

Conclusion

The cooperative efforts and coordination of activities of two diverse organizations can be combined into an organized attack upon a critical social problem. Each contributor provides the expertise of its organization. Each contributor is recognized for its input and each receives its due. At a time when fiscal accountability is carefully examined in the university and government, such a model as developed in Pennsylvania responds to this critical issue.

Table A

Demographic Data on Program Participants N = 292

AGE	mean 39.2 years	Age distribution
		2.8% 0-19 years
		33.6% 20-29 years
		18.8% 30-39 years
		20.9% 40-49 years
		16.4% 50-59 years
		6.8% 60-69 years
		.7% 70+ years
SEX		22.6% male
		75.7% female
THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF FORMAL EDUCATION		
		11.6% High School Diploma
		2.7% Vocational or Technical School
		22.6% Some college work
		38.4% College or University degree
		20.9% Master's degree or some graduate work
		1.3% Doctorate degree
THE AMOUNT OF TIME WITH PRESENT AGENCY		
	mean 5.2 years	Distribution
		44.1% Less than .5 years
		32.0% 1.5 through 5.5 years
		13.5% 5.51 through 10.5 years
		3.3% 10.51 through 14.5 years
		5.7% 14.51 through 25.5 years
		1.4% over 25.5 years
AMOUNT OF DIRECT CONTACT WITH ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS		
		60.6% Several times a day
		6.5% At least once a day
		19.2% Several times a week
		5.8% At least once a week
		3.4% About once a month

Table A

REASONS FOR ATTENDING

73.6%	Gain specific training
18.5%	Curiosity about the subject
31.2%	Meet the specialists/researchers in the field
18.8%	Meet some colleagues interested in the subject
5.8%	Required by my supervisor
57.5%	Gain resource information, e.g., help agencies, publications, specific persons, government offices
8.6%	Other

OCCURRENCE OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

28.8%	On a regular basis, e.g., weekly, monthly
37.3%	As programs become available
11.0%	Sporadically
17.1%	No regularly scheduled programs are offered